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SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA: GAUTENG PREMIER SHILOWA REPORTS ON THE STATE
OF THE PROVINCE

Summary

1. Gauteng Premier Mbhazima Shilowa addressed the provincial legislature on February 18, outlining achievements of the past year and setting priorities for 2008. As in previous years, Shilowa's main emphasis was on service delivery achievements, poverty alleviation, and measure taken to promote economic and job growth. However, he led off with an appeal to the citizenry to join in fighting crime and in promoting road safety, noting both unnecessary road deaths and the tendency of mini-bus taxi drivers to see themselves above all traffic laws.

His comments that 2010 was not only about building soccer stadia but also about having Bafana Bafana become a world-class soccer team met with resounding applause. End Summary.

2. Premier Mbhazima Shilowa opened the 2008 legislative year for the Gauteng provincial parliament on February 2008. The audience and members of the legislature were treated to entertainment commencing at 6:30 a.m., with live community media coverage also starting. Youth groups provided entertainment, although one group of energetic dancers had numerous wardrobe malfunctions that were taken in good part by the male members of the audience. Shilowa opened his speech by encouraging the citizenry to join hands in the fight against crime and for road safety. Departing from his prepared text, he deplored recent incidents of violence among mini-bus taxi-drivers and noted that their perception of themselves as being exempt from all traffic laws needed to be brought to an end.

Service Delivery and Poverty Alleviation

3. The Premier said that Gauteng had seen a massive in-migration into the province, with 10.4 million people now residing there or one out of every four South African households. Despite this, the number of residents in informal settlements dropped to 22.6 percent. Gauteng registered the highest proportion of electricity users in SA, at 83.5 percent, and 97.9 percent of households had access to piped water. In addition to road upgrades and new water works for the Vaal region, Gauteng will have delivered 58,552 new houses for the year ending in March 2008. An additional 103,000 dwellings were upgraded during the year. Shilowa said that the adoption of the Gauteng Framework on Indigent Policy set out a common approach for dealing with the poor across the province. An integrated database was being developed to maximize services for the poor, to include free water and electricity, rates rebates, social grants, free health care, free education, indigent burials, free scholar transport, and home-based care for those affected by HIV/AIDS. Access to skills development and economic opportunities would also be addressed.

Economic and Job Growth

¶4. Shilowa noted that 146,000 new jobs had been created in Gauteng for the year ending in March 2007, with a total of 3.4 million jobs currently in existence in the province. Shilowa said that continued implementation of the growth and development strategy, including investment in key economic infrastructure and addressing energy and sustainable development, was a priority. He added that the province had agreed on a number of energy conservation measures and cited the Gauteng Legislature Building as one of three departments that failed to switch off lights at night. Shilowa said he was pleased that large investors, such as Ford Motor Company, had not been deterred by the electricity crisis and would proceed with a R1.5 billion investment in South Africa, including an expansion of the assembly plant in Tshwane. He added that 4404 direct jobs had been created at the Automotive Supplier Park between 2002-2007, with 70 percent of those jobs going to Historically Disadvantaged South Africans. Gauteng also planned to establish a one-stop shop for businesses interested in investing in Gauteng, which would reduce red tape and streamline approval processes. Another economic growth effort was the implementation of the G-link initiative to provide affordable broadband to 95 percent of the population within five years.

Services for Children

¶5. The percentage of children between ages 5 and 24 attending educational institutions increased from 66.9 in 2001 to 68.8 in ¶2007. The Bana Pele program continued to provide services to the poorest children in the province, such as exemption from school fees, free transport to and from school, health care and school feeding programs. Under this program, 80,000 free school uniforms had been distributed during the financial year, up from 24,700 the previous year. Priority areas included phasing in

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Grade R (reception aka kindergarten) and making it compulsory. 41,736 children were currently attending publicly funded grade R and the number of sites offering preschool education had increased from 960 to 1360 in 2007. School fees in the poorest schools had been eliminated as of January 2007, benefiting 378,000 children in 426 schools. As of April 2008, 49 percent of students would no longer be required to pay school fees, thus benefiting 865,000 children. In addition, there were programs to ensure a quality education and an emphasis on science and math. In addition the province would offer free immunizations against preventable diseases such as measles and polio to all children under age one.

Health care and HIV/AIDS

¶6. On health care, the premier said that Gauteng would introduce multiple therapy to prevent transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother to child as of April 2008, and aim to reduce transmission rates to less than 5 percent. Gauteng had exceeded its target to train 3000 community health workers, and now had 3500 on the rolls, with then number of sites offering comprehensive care due to increase to 63 from 52 currently established. Shilowa also noted that currently 104,560 persons, including 10,195 children, were receiving anti-retrovirals in the province.

Crime and Corruption

¶7. In addition to leading off with the condemnation of road safety and violence among taxi drivers, Shilowa also condemned recent price fixing scandals in the bread, milk and pharmaceutical industries. He said that further expansion of the public call centers was planned, which allow citizens to access a variety of services including bookings for drivers' licenses. Shilowa noted that there had been issues with call center operators and people working in testing centers to

undermine the centralized booking system in order to receive bribes. Shilowa committed to rooting out fraud, corruption and unethical behavior in the public and private sectors.

¶8. On crime, Premier Shilowa said rates for some crimes had been falling but remained unacceptably high, and said that he was horrified by the extent of violence associated with crimes committed in the province. He noted that the 10111 emergency call center was now operational in Midrand and that vehicle location systems had been installed in 1800 to allow faster dispatch to the sites of emergencies. Shilowa said that all 6200 provincial vehicles would be fitted with monitoring units before the end of the financial year. In addition to increasing community safety volunteers, Gauteng was increasing social crime prevention and improving and expanding its police performance system.

Preparations for 2010

¶9. Shilowa said that Gauteng had successfully hosted Soccerex, the convention on the business of football, in November 2007, and progress had been made in making Gauteng the home of competitive sport. Tourism facilities were also being upgraded, with 100 percent grading of accommodations to be completed by ¶2010. There had been a threefold increase of facilities around Dinokeng and the Cradle of Humankind. Departing from his prepared text, Shilowa noted that building soccer stadia was only one part of the 2010 preparation and the other part involved having a national soccer team of a caliber that brought the nation together behind it, and Bafana Bafana needed to get its act together. Most members of his audience appeared to agree with Shilowa's assessment.

Foreign Relations

¶10. Shilowa said the province had signed a declaration of intent with Katanga province in the Congo and would participate in an economic summit in Lubumbashi in April 2008. Gauteng had also signed a cooperation agreement with Moscow Oblast and renewed agreements with Ile de France, Bavaria and Baden Wurttemberg. He said the agreement with Moscow would provide capacity in nanotechnology and space technology. Shilowa said that he expected to strengthen relations with Beijing, Ontario and Havana in 2008.

COFFMAN